

stressed too strongly, that it is an enormous saving in terms of time. Time is a very precious commodity — not to be wasted.

RECORDS

There are 4000 component records, 1500 fabrication-type assembly files and approximately 400 actual assemblies on the R850 and these will grow until the records are old and ready to be deleted. However, one of the problems with estimating is that you should not throw anything away. A designer may wish to check on a five-year-old drawing to see how the price was arrived at then, and what it would cost today. Now that Dowty Mining have these records on the R850 all they require is the drawing number, tap it in, and give the designer any information he requires. Before the computer was installed the estimators would say "Oh God, where did I put that file, down in the strong room or was it thrown away? — Sorry Jack, we will have to start

all over again." That might be three days work or even three weeks work.

Now the information is to hand, and covers component details, drawing number of component, description of component, weight of material used in the component and type of manufacture. Records now exist of components making up a sub-assembly, with a sub-assembly at another stage calling up those components on that sub-assembly plus other sub-assemblies added. A facility for calling up all the assemblies and making a complete check also exists.

What they have on the Rediffusion computer is the ability to look at items — say a block of piston heads varying in diameter and varying in size where there should be an inter-relationship between price of these components. They can now pull out all the piston heads under that heading, and analyse them in a much faster way than they were able to do before.

To prove that time was actually being saved a little exercise was

undertaken where the estimators took a sample of components and altered the labour and material rates. It was taking an average of six minutes per component to find the card, and change these rates manually to arrive at a new value. When the same exercise was run on the computer it took an average of six seconds. Having this effective tool has eliminated an onerous task and allowed them to get on with the job they are paid to do.

INVOLVEMENT

Estimators are involved in the daily running of the system from systems saves to operating it generally. The whole R850 framework is user friendly and this is possibly one of its most attractive features. The R850 is not some sort of monster hidden away in a corner and if a button is touched the reaction is 'Oh Dear!' what is going to happen next. The estimators have confidence in their system and when you have confidence in something then any

problems take care of themselves.

PRICE RECORDS DEPARTMENT

With the success of the R850 the next link in the computer chain is to be the price records department. The senior dp management, having witnessed and approved the results to date agreed to upgrade the system thus offering a computer facility to the price records department. Six terminals are to be installed later this year. This department will be attempting text editing (word processing) on the system producing quotations and spares order notes as well as running their own suites of programs.

CONCLUSION

In summing up, when Cutler was asked whether he had been pleased with the system's performance to date he replied: "Yes, so far it has done everything we wanted it to do, and we shall continue to test its capabilities even further."



Gloster Gladiator